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自然史博物館作為自然與文化的連結 Natural History Museum as Nexus of Natural and Culture

## How natural history museums promote climate actions with traditional culture: Examples from National Taiwan Museum

自然史博物館如何以傳統文化推廣氣候行動：以國立臺灣博物館為例

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As the “Taipei Declaration on Conservation” has stated, natural history museums hold the responsibility to *engage the public to form deep bonds with the natural world and commit to its preservation*. National Taiwan Museum as the oldest museum in Taiwan is also obligated for preserving traditional cultures while working to strengthen the society’s environmental resilience. To elaborate this approach, the paper takes two examples from the Museum, namely, the “Sustainable New Year’s Table Project” and “Tour Service of Museums in Multiple National Languages Implementation Project”.

“Sustainable New Year’s Table Project”, having been in action for four years, touches various issues to create a sustainable festive culture, including the ecological impact on ocean under climate change and consumers’ action on New Year’s seafood selection, leftover crisis and proposed actions for different levels, and edible insects on the future table. “Tour Service of Museums in Multiple National Languages Implementation Project” aims to propel cultural equity and enrich the Museum’s scope on disaster preparedness. Taking Paiwan Tribe language for instance, the tribal people would use clear indication of geographical features while naming places, and thus clues concerning disasters abound in their language. In addition, the challenges in the translation from Mandarin to indigenous languages reveal the different perspectives on the environment from different ethnic groups in Taiwan. In sum, the paper provides practical experiences of promoting climate actions by combining nature and culture in the Museum’s outreach and implementation projects, and further shows the importance of transdisciplinarity in the age of man. [247 words]

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National Taiwan Museum is the oldest museum in Taiwan, established in 1908 as the Taiwan General Office’s Museum under the Japanese Colonial Government. After WWII Chinese Nationalist Government took over Taiwan and hence the name of the Museum changed. Fortunately, the Museum still serves the same purpose as a natural history museum. In 2015, the Museum had the honor to implement ICOM NATHIST 2015 annual conference, in which “*Taipei Declaration on Conservation*” was drafted, amended and published, marking the collective efforts of the international community

in biodiversity conservation. The Museum is also making efforts in innovative environmental education soon after the promulgation of Taiwan's Environmental Education Act in 2010, winning the Merit Award of National Environmental Education Award in 2015. The Museum follows tightly with the trends and advancements in the international museum community.

The challenges natural history museums face can be mutual. While the development of modern science has precipitated large-scaled studies, the traditional natural history realm seemed to be shrinking. However, with the recent heated discussion on Anthropocene and sustainable development, the natural historical epistemology has once again been highlighted. In recent years, the international community, under such influence, has shown various major changes in research, collection, exhibition and outreach. These changes occurred in the way of interpreting nature and in challenging for a more bottom-up approach in all aspects. In other words, there is a call for civil engagement and reflective modernity in the institution, and a call to enhance the interdisciplinary and even transdisciplinary crosstalk. Therefore, it is crucial that natural history museum works to connect different realms and break the boundaries.

In this paper, we will elaborate our approach by introducing two examples from the Museum, the "Tour Service of Museums in Multiple National Languages Implementation Project" and "Sustainable New Year's Table Project".

Same as many peers in the natural history museum community, National Taiwan Museum dedicates to natural studies; however, probably different from many peers, the Museum has been challenged on postcolonialism and modernity because of the country's complicated history. The colonization in Taiwan did not only occurred in between the World Wars, but throughout Taiwan's written history as we call it "co-colonization".

Different ethnicities dominate one another, at the same time with dominant narrative suppressing the indigenous knowledge that is crucial for building up environmental resilience. Taking Taiwan's 2009 Typhoon Morakot disaster for example, according to one of our invited Paiwan tribe speakers in our urban naturalist lecture, the tribal people used to search for the post-hazard relocation sites by following the "routes"(Paiwan language: Kjipakingin ta Talan) named by their ancestors. Especially, the Paiwan names usually embody the geographical features and the tendency to disasters. The above practice plays a pivotal role in connecting their relocation history, language, culture and hazard rebuilding. These connections can hardly be probed with modern technology given limited time. Unfortunately, when the typhoon struck Paiwan tribes, the Han Chinese government chose to take over the

relocation planning. The decontextualized plan consequently led to the ill adaptation of the tribal elders after relocation. Eventually the tribal people demanded participation in organizing new relocation site. The coordination meetings were conducted in Paiwan language in order to take account of the elder's oral history. The importance of native language for indigenous tribes speaks for itself.

The Ministry of Culture of Taiwan strives to revive indigenous cultures by promoting "Tour Service of Museums in Multiple National Languages Implementation Project". So far, the Museum has implemented two indigenous languages in the multimedia materials in the permanent exhibition "Discovering Taiwan", including Paiwan and Atayal language, along with hand gesture language and other Han Chinese languages. However, the Museum encountered various challenges in the Project. For instance, most indigenous languages concern nomadic herding or hunting and thus are untranslatable for terms of 3C devices or modern techniques. In addition, when it comes to describing natural environment, indigenous languages tend to be more anthropocentric and within the ecosystem because of their hunting practices, while Chinese language tends to describe environment more objectively and therefore is more sophisticated. This reminds us that we need to be aware of the issue of language subjectivity and the connection between the script and indigenous population's life and culture. The content provided by the Museum has to be provocative for indigenous population in order to evoke their colorful memory about the environment and the land.

The second case, "Sustainable New Year's Table Project", on the other hand, demonstrates how the Museum promotes an innovative environmental education project under the dominating Han Chinese culture in Taiwan.

Lunar New Year's reunion dinner has always been the most anticipated meal of the year for most Taiwanese people, featuring a wide variety of seafood. This is because the Chinese word for fish, "Yú", also means sufficiency, and that fish can refer to all kinds of seafood that abound in Taiwan. Advanced fishing technology has made our daily meals possible as plentiful as the New Year's feast, while many scientific reports have pointed out the devastating decline in offshore fishery resources. Influenced by Japanese culture, Taiwanese people are fond of sashimi during the New Years' reunion dinner and even daily meals. While many Taiwanese would fly to Japan and enjoy sashimi, little do they know that almost one third of the tuna sashimi in Japanese sushi restaurants comes from Taiwanese fishing boats, many of which are producing IUU (illegal, unreported and unregulated) seafood. A major scandal of an Indonesian fish worker abused to death reveals Taiwan's problematic far-sea fishing boats. The loss of

awareness of ocean biodiversity and seafood industrial chain could do harm to our New Year culture and even social justice.

“Sustainable New Year’s Table Project” aims to enhance the public’s food literacy, especially concerning New Year’s culture. The Museum has been cooperating with fishery scientists to promote *Taiwan’s Seafood Selection Guide*. It shares the same concept with many other seafood guides in the world, but it has to take account of endemic scientific research and local fishery management. One of the good examples is the flathead grey mullet that used to be abundant in Taiwan. It is also one of the main driving forces for the Han Chinese to migrate to Taiwan during Ming and Qing Dynasty, just as Newfoundland cod used to attract North American and European migrants. The old Taiwanese idiom, “Mullet of winter solstice resembles pork knuckles”, describes the fatty savory mullet in season. In Japanese Period, the preparation method for mullet roe was introduced to Taiwan, making mullet roe an expensive New Year present. With all body parts usable, the flathead grey mullet brings fishermen considerable profits. However, due to international competition and the problem of overfishing, the mullet catch has plummeted. The problem of climate change has also altered mullet’s breeding behavior, shifting the spawning site to further north, and consequently reduced the hatching rate of the spawn and the survival rate of the juveniles. Fortunately, mullet farming is now available and provides steady production. As a result, in *Taiwan’s Seafood Selection Guide*, cultured mullet is preferred over wild caught mullet.

Wild caught seafood does not always mean un-ecofriendly. One major goal for the Project is to replace the seafood from un-ecofriendly fishing methods with the more eco-friendly options. The trick is to learn the fish diversity in different seasons of your region. In this year’s event, the Museum invited the elementary school students from a fishing village to lecture school kids in Taipei how to eat bonny fish that is in season. The activity combines two parts including introducing the ocean biodiversity and ecology of the local region and promoting slow food movement. Another highlight is that the kids from the fishing village are significantly more sensitive to fish ecology. What they did was spreading their local knowledge to the urban area, and helping citizens to build up environmental awareness.

Both cases from the Museum show how different knowledge systems can contribute to Museum’s conservation work and climate actions, and that these innovative approaches were inspired by traditional and local cultures. [1334 words]